Hall Announces Life-Saving Health Care Information Technology Legislation
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- Bills will help improve patient care, reduce number of accidental injuries and deaths -

Mt Kisco, NY – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) today called for support of bipartisan legislation that will improve the nation's medical care through the use of health care information technology (IT), aiming to strengthen the quality of health care and reduce the roughly 7,000 preventable deaths that occur every year from illegible prescriptions and bad drug interactions.

"Hospitals and physician groups that have adopted computerized systems have seen mistakes and miscommunication decrease by as much as 75%. In the interest of protecting patients from unnecessary errors, the federal government must make sure that both the standards for these programs and the funding to implement them are in place," said Hall.

On Tuesday, Hall visited two locations in the Hudson Valley that already have adopted the use of electronic medical records and electronic writing of prescriptions – two aspects of medical information technology that are directly helping patients by reducing errors, saving lives and making it easier to keep track of information about one's medical care.

One of the health care IT initiatives Hall is supporting in Congress is the Pro(TECH)t Act (H.R. 6357), bipartisan legislation that promotes the nationwide adoption of health care IT and provides financial incentives towards this goal. This bill allocates more than $500 million in grants for health care providers to implement IT systems and puts particular emphasis on their installation in more rural and underserved areas. It sets national standards for health care IT so that a patient from one state can have their medical history available to a doctor in another. This legislation also reduces health care providers' operating costs and patients' medical bills in the process. With 30% of annual health care spending, or roughly $300 billion, going to duplicate paperwork or redundant tests and medications, health care IT stands eliminate this waste by improving the record-keeping of and communication among medical providers.

Hall is also working to pass the E-MEDS Act, a law that seeks to encourage and expand the use of electronic prescription-filing by doctors. Thousands of avoidable injuries, hospitalizations and deaths occur every year from mistakes caused when patients received the wrong prescriptions or had bad drug reactions. E-prescribing IT can significantly reduce the number of these incidents, and the E-MEDS Act provides funding through Medicare so that doctors can acquire the technology to begin doing it.

E-Prescribing allows doctors and pharmacists to instantly check for the potential of bad drug reactions, consult a patient's medical history for possible allergic reactions, and make sure the correct drugs and dosages are administered. A recent study conducted by Cornell University and the Taconic Health Information Network and Community, Regional Health Information Organization (THINC RHIO), found that 20% of the time, E-Prescriptions must be rewritten to

avoid harmful drug interactions, preventing patient injuries that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. This stands as a sobering statistic when considering that most prescriptions do not have the same level of oversight.

Joel Seligman, President and CEO of Northern Westchester Hospital, has seen how successful health care IT can be right here in the Hudson Valley.

"Healthcare information technology is an important initiative and one of the most effective ways to improve patient safety and quality of care. Northern Westchester Hospital, along with our Stellaris partners, has invested in a state-of-the-art information system that had greatly enhanced communication among members of the medical care team," Seligman said.

Representative Hall's work in Congress seeks to build on New York State's efforts towards the increased use of health care information technology statewide. New York has pledged more than $100 million in IT grants and investments, including a $12 million grant for use in the Hudson Valley by the Taconic Health Information Network and Community, Regional Health Information Organization (THINC RHIO). A non-profit corporation, THINC RHIO is dedicated to improving the patient care of local medical providers through their adoption of health care IT, administering grant money to help offset the technology's cost. "Through the appropriate implementation of health care IT, THINC RHIO believes that it can make the Hudson Valley a better place for patients to receive treatment and for doctors to practice," according to Susan Stuard, the organization's Executive Director. Groups like THINC RHIO have helped move New York ahead of the nation in health care information technology, but extending the benefits of these advances to much of the nation will require Congressional action.

"Ensuring the ability of medical information technology to work across state boundaries, live up to quality standards, and to be adequately funded must be addressed at the federal level. New York is a leader in the use of life-saving medical information technology. I am working in Congress to apply our state's example of improving patient care and safety to the rest of the country," Hall added.

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